

# Valuing One Another in the Body

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, service, and giving honor to others in the body of Christ.*

**Duration:** 38:36

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 12:12

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Humility In Service"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the unity and purpose of the body of Christ, focusing on the significance of the breaking of bread as a symbol of partaking in Christ's death and the importance of examining oneself in relation to fellow believers. It delves into the concept of different members in the body having unique roles and the need to avoid both inferiority and superiority complexes. The message stresses the value of humility, serving others selflessly, and honoring God by fulfilling one's responsibilities within the church without seeking recognition or competing with fellow believers.

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## Transcript

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians in chapter 10, verse 17. Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of that one bread. This is something we have often thought about, but we want to repeat that one meaning of the breaking of bread is that the body of Christ was crucified on the cross for us and we partake of that death with him.

But there are two bodies of Christ. One is the physical body. We have fellowship in his death on the cross.

The other is the spiritual body. And that is also being represented in the bread. That's what he says here.

And so he says here about when we eat and drink, verse 28, chapter 11, chapter 11, 28. Let a man examine himself and thus eat the bread and drink the cup because if he doesn't eat and drink like that, he is eating and drinking judgment to himself because he has not judged the body of Christ rightly. So he is talking about relationships in the body of Christ.

Examine yourself particularly in relation to your relationship with other members of the body of Christ with whom you are breaking bread this morning. Not with other people anywhere else. You are not breaking bread with people in Argentina or China or Russia.

You are breaking bread not even with everybody in Bangalore. You are breaking bread with certain people whom you claim to be committed to. Or you asked sometime of the year when the elders asked you, do

you want to be committed? You said, yes, I want to be committed.

And now you are expressing that commitment in this way. In the world, they have forms where they make you sign, everybody signs together. But Jesus said, we do it by breaking bread together.

So this leads on to what he says in chapter 12 and verse 12. As the body is one and has many members, and all the members, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. So he is saying the foot cannot say, verse 15, because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body.

That is what we call an inferiority complex. It is very easy for anyone sitting here to feel inferior. There are many reasons that can make us feel inferior to others.

One is, we may not be so educated, we may not be so rich, we may be poor, we live in a small house, everybody else is much better off than us. That makes us feel inferior. Or a person can feel inferior just because he is short in height.

Or he is not good looking, or too dark, or hasn't done well in school. Children can feel inferior. Anything that makes us feel we are lesser than somebody else, the great danger is that therefore you say, well I am not really of any use in this body.

There are so many other more gifted people. I am just nobody. I am in the feet.

Feet means right at the bottom of the body. It cannot say that I am not a part of the body. That is what it says in chapter 12, verse 15.

It is a very, very common mistake. The man who was given one talent, compared himself with the man who has got 10 or 5, and says I don't have so much. And so what did he do? He buried his talent in the ground.

But have you ever thought that 11 people with one talent would have more than one person with 10 talents? There are many one talent people in the church. And if they all join together and do their part, there will be 100 talents, more than that 10 talent single man. For some reason known only to God, he has gifted certain brothers, like Paul for example, with tremendous gifts.

He was an apostle and prophet and evangelist and teacher and shepherd, all put in one. But there are very few people like that. Most people have not even one of those five gifts, maybe some other gift.

Maybe the gift of helps. It says in chapter 12, verse 28, about in the church God has put apostles, prophets, teachers. Those are number 1, number 2, number 3. There is an order.

God has made apostles first, he has put prophets second, and he has put teachers third. Then, then means fourth. Fourth is one big group.

There is no 4, 5, 6. There is only four. There are only four groups. First apostles, second prophets, third teachers, fourth, miracle workers, those who have the gift of healing, helps, those who have administrative ability and who speak in tongues.

So all of them are number 4. I mean, do you know that a person who does miracles is the same level in God's eyes as the one who is just a helper. Helps is something that every one of us can ask God to make. Maybe you don't have the gift of miracles or healing or preaching or prophecy.

Helps is such a simple word. It is not even defined in scripture. So I accept it to mean any way you can help the body of Christ.

In any way. There are numerous ways in which you can help the body of Christ. In Romans chapter 12 it says about some people who have the gift of giving money to the church.

There are some people like that, who have a unique gift of generosity to the body of Christ. That's how a lot of things in CFC functions. We've had a lot of expenses in CFC and its functions because there are a few people who have a tremendous gift of generosity that covers those expenses.

Some don't give anything. That's fine. We never ask for anything.

But all these 40 and more years we've always found that God takes care of our needs because he has put some people with the gift of generosity. They are helps. They don't have any prominence.

They are helps. There are people who help when somebody is in need or somebody is sick and they would send some food to them. These are all helps.

These are all gifts in the body of Christ. Encouraging one another. Sometimes just calling up somebody and talking to them.

I mean, the numerous people who tell me, out of the blue Brother Newton called me and I got encouraged hearing from him. Or somebody told me today that their daughter newly coming here was very discouraged but told her mother that but when Brother Newton gets up into the pulpit I get encouraged. It's a gift, you know.

You can't imitate it. You can't duplicate it. But you don't realize how somebody is helped by your little gift.

You may say a few words. And these are things you can do. You can call up somebody if you have a burden.

Say, Lord, I want to be a help in the body of Christ. We all have cell phones nowadays just to call up someone when you have a burden in your heart. Someone you know well and just to encourage them.

You never know. If you are sensitive to God, God will stir you sometimes to do that. And you may find that person is really grateful that you gave them a word just in season.

We have to be a little bold here. And so there are many, many things. Think of that wide area of helps.

It's a fantastically wide area where all the people who help in singing and the projection of the screen and putting it on the internet. These are all helps. Tremendous area in which all of us with whatever gift we have can fulfill that function.

Even some people selling the books at the back. They're doing a function. Otherwise, somebody won't get that book they need that will help them.

There is no ministry which is not covered by that helps. So none of you can say, I have no gift. And administration, organizing things, these are all different gifts.

And then it says here also about the opposite mistake, which is superiority complex. Verse 21. The eye, the eye is a very important part of the body, says to the hand, I don't need you.

You know, if somebody were to ask you, which would you rather lose, your eye or your hand? All of us would say hand, definitely. The eye is more important. If I rather lose one hand, I can do many things with the other hand, but not lose one eye.

So, eye can feel itself very important. It's possible some of us, through the years, because of our gift, have got a certain prominence in the church. That means you are more visible than other people.

Because God gave you a gift. You became more prominent. It could be preaching, it could be leading the, who are the people who are leading the singing or playing the instruments? Something that makes you a little prominent in the eyes of others.

The great danger you have, let me tell you straight, is of thinking that you are very, very important. Of not saying to somebody, I don't need you, but having that attitude towards someone. Well, I mean, we can do without you, but church can't do without me.

That is absolute nonsense. And that, I want to tell you, that's the thing that can destroy you to the point where you may one day lose your salvation, even though right now you think you may not. Heed my words.

I have seen many people like that. I have used the illustration here, which I have often thought of. If you ever think you are very indispensable, indispensable means the church can't do without me.

It's a height of stupidity. And the instruction I give to such people is, take a bucket of water, put your hand into the bucket of water, and pull it out, and the hole that is remaining there, that is how much you are going to be missed when you go. There is no hole there.

Some other water comes and fills it up. And you who are such a gifted person, when you go away, somebody else will come and fill it up, probably better than you. That is the attitude I take.

I say, Lord, your work went on in this world long before I was born. It will carry on, if you tarry, long after I am gone. I am here for a small period of time to do my job and move on.

I never believe I am indispensable. I believe God's work will carry on much better. We must recognize that all of us are only a part, there is only one person indispensable, that is Jesus Christ himself, because he is the head.

That's why in heaven they say, Thou art worthy. Not Paul, not Peter, nobody. Thou alone art worthy.

So I want to say to all of you who feel you are very important, you know sometimes you see people in the world, they have an air about them. They know they are very important people, film stars, cabinet ministers, important people in the world, and I have seen that with some people in CFC. Some of them fall away, some of them are still around, but there is a little air of importance.

Be very careful. Pursue humility. So I cannot say to the hand, I don't need you.

And here is the most wonderful statement of all, this is the most amazing statement, in this chapter, chapter 12 verse 21, Jesus does not say to the lowest member in the body, I don't need you. The head does not say to the feet, I don't need you. That should put all of us who think we are very important to shame.

That Jesus does not say to the lowest member, I don't need you. On the contrary, verse 22, it's much more true that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. Like I have often used the example of the nails, very small member, but nothing can help you when you feel itchy, but nails.

No part of the body can help you then, which are very small, weak. And those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members seem to have more abundant seemliness. There are parts of our body which we never see, like the kidney, the liver, and many other inward parts of the body, the heart, but they are far more important than many visible parts.

The visible parts get the prominence, but if those invisible parts don't function, the body collapses. And I want to say to you that there are some wonderful invisible parts in CFC Bangalore. I praise God for them.

You hardly see them. They never stand on the pulpit. They are always working behind the scenes.

They are the ones who help in serving, cooking the food, and so many other things. You never see them. There is no prominence there.

But there is a spirit of service that I have seen in some wonderful brothers and sisters, which I know it will go exceptionally well with them in the long run. Their reward will be great in heaven, because they didn't get much appreciation down here. And it also says here, God, verse 24, the middle of that verse, God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to the member which lacked gift.

This is not human way. Man's way is to give more abundant honor to the man who's got gift. Look at Christendom.

Who are the people who get the most honor? Great preachers, singers. Not only honor, they are the ones who make the most money. Preachers, singers, leaders, who got some ability.

And those with less gift, they are sort of sidelined by Christendom. But God gives them more abundant honor. And he says, that is the way, verse 25, that he ensures that there's no division in the body, that the members should have the same care for one another.

So if you want a church that's not divided, you know, one bread, not broken, but one bread, you who are more gifted, need to really appreciate those who are not gifted. That's the only way. And the only way to do that is not to be proud of your gift, but to make way for those without gift, to raise them up.

See, when someone has a unique gift, naturally people will depend on him more, and look up to him. But if you are really a godly person, you will train another person to do your job and pull back. That's exactly what fathers do.

Fathers train their children to pull back. You look at all the big business companies in India, Ambani's, Tata's, Birla's, it's all in the family. One person started it 100 years ago, then his son, then his son, son, son, son, son, son, son, it goes on in the family, and by the time it comes to our generation, these empires have become so huge, because each father trained his son to do a better job than he himself did.

They were not jealous, oh, my son is doing a better job than me. No. You see all these business houses, every generation is doing better than the previous generation.

Why can't we see that in the church? We are a really gifted brother. I am not just talking about preaching. I am talking about every ministry in the church, every single down-to-earth practical thing, where we train others to do a better job than we did.

That's a real father. And we want more of that in CFC. That's the spirit of Christ, who is the head, who does not say to the feet, I don't need you.

Think of this statement of Jesus in John's Gospel, chapter 14. John 14, he says in verse 12, Truly I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also, and greater works shall he do. Because I go to the Father, when I go to the Father, I am going to send the Holy Spirit, as he says in verse 16, to make you, disciples, do greater things than I have done.

When did Jesus get to baptize 3000 people in one day? Never. Peter did it. Greater things.

When did Jesus get even 2 or 3 people to be so united without division? We've seen it in CFC. But Jesus did not see it in his entire life. 12 disciples, yeah, they were fighting with each other on the last day.

We are doing greater works today. Not because we are greater than Jesus, but because those 12 disciples did not have the Holy Spirit. But we, today people have the Holy Spirit.

That's why we become one. But you look at it externally, the end of Jesus' ministry, 12 disciples fighting with each other. Here in our ministry, more than 12 people, completely united, not seeking their own gain.

It's a greater work, because the Holy Spirit is there. But Jesus said, I want you to do the greater work. I want you to get that honor, that you've done a greater work.

That is the Spirit of Christ. We speak about humility, humility, humility. This is humility.

Humility is to get other people to do a greater work than you. And to pull back. I want to tell you something about the way we have built the body of Christ in churches in India.

Right from the beginning, I felt the only way to do it is the way I did it in my home, the way I brought up my children. As soon as possible, train them to eat by themselves. As soon as possible, train them to bathe themselves.

As soon as possible, teach them to ride a cycle and go to school by cycle by themselves. As soon as possible, send them off to college and make them live by themselves and struggle to earn their living. Then they become men.

The same principle in the church. We start a church, soon as possible, not immediately, you can't send a child out to the street when he is two years old. Everything at the right time.

Soon as possible, appoint elders and don't sit on their head and tell them what to do. I never do that. If they have a problem, they consult me, but I pull back and say, you run it.

You'll make mistakes, of course you'll make mistakes. I saw my children falling down when they were learning to ride the cycle. I didn't stop them.

If I kept on holding the back of the bike, they'd never learn. They have to fall, get up, learn, get a bit hurt, it's okay. In the same way, I remember the early days, Ian and I worked together right from day one in

CFC.

And naturally, because I already had a name as a preacher, he respected me. And so he would consult me. But I didn't want that to continue.

And I remember in those early days when we'd have a holiday or something, and we'd have a fasting and prayer. And some days, I was not here, I was traveling. And Ian would ask me, Brother Zak, what shall we do on such and such a day? I said, I don't know.

Always my answer was, I don't know. Because that's how he's developed, and that's how many others, that's how Newton has developed, and others, I said, we pull back and say, you decide. That's how we built CFC, and we want that spirit to continue right down to the last person.

I remember when I was in the Navy, how my senior admiral, I've heard the story, would train his commanding officers of the ships to take independent decisions. Don't just depend always on the admiral to tell you what to do. So, there was one particular situation where the admiral gave a signal to the other commanding officer of the ship, when you reach that point, turn, turn your ship.

And the commanding officer asked, Sir, turn left or turn right? The answer, the admiral answered, yes. Sir, turn right or turn left? No. The captain understood.

He wants me to take my own decision. He's not going to tell me. There's a great principle there.

We're not talking about little babies. We're talking about people who are, who can take a decision, and who can do. They won't do it perfectly, but that's how they learn.

If you can be like that, you're one of the most valuable assets in this church. If you can, as quickly as possible, don't wait for 20 years. It'll be too late.

Start day one. It's what I've done always, in every church, from day one, as soon as possible. Because, you know, we start with our children, as soon as possible, to eat on their own, feed themselves, drink water on their own, drink, I mean, the milk bottle, they start drinking pretty early.

In a few months, they're drinking on their own. So, as soon as possible, whatever they can, and gradually, they don't need us. That is how we are to function as a body.

We give honor, like God gives, to the weaker member. Are you honoring some weaker member right now? Do you look for the lonely person and try to befriend him? Do you look for the person standing outside all by themselves after a meeting, nobody talking to some stranger? Do you walk up to that person and say, Hello, brother, sister. Who are you? Can I get to know you? Or something like that.

Or do you always go hanging out with your friends? These are the little things that show a true Christian. The one who is always alert to see, whom can I encourage here? Whom can I help? When my boys went to school, I used to tell them, Listen, what type of friends did Jesus make at school? Do you think he always made friends with the rich people? No, he made friends with the poor and the one who was a little lonely. So, I believe that everybody in the body of Christ must be like that.

Look out for those who are a little shy and withdrawn. And go out and make friends with them. And encourage them.

Little children who are shy to come to you, go and... Some children are very bold. That's fine. They take care of themselves.

But think of the shy one. Go and encourage that person. Because the shy one already feels inferior.

I'm not so smart and capable and outgoing like the other person. Never mind. Encourage them.

In every area, remember this. It's not the most gifted person who is the most valuable in the body of Christ. The gifted person can have prominence.

If that gifted person has humility, where he is willing to withdraw and let another person shine even better than him. You know, when they came to John the Baptist in John chapter 3 and told him, Hey, Rabbi, John 3, 26, that person whom you baptized, he's going and baptizing more people than you. He is John 3, 26.

He's baptizing more people than you. And all the people were coming to us. Now they're all going to him.

And John said, A man can receive nothing unless it's been given him from heaven. I told you I'm not the Messiah. I'm only a friend.

Verse 30, He must increase but I must decrease. That is the spirit in the body of Christ. Not just that Jesus must increase.

But if you are a prominent, gifted person in any function in CFC Bangalore, your aim must be, I must decrease so that I give room for that other person to grow up and increase and become a useful member of the body of Christ. Otherwise I'll sit there like a Maharaja, like King Saul who would not allow David to come up. But a lot of Saul's.

And see how Jesus acted. The same thing that John's disciples told John. In chapter 4, it says here John 4 verse 1 The Lord knew the Pharisees are saying Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John.

When Jesus heard it, what did he do? He left Judea. Verse 3. He said, I'm not in a competition. Let John do the baptisms.

He went away to Galilee. This is the spirit of Christ. John and Jesus just mutually pushing the other person forward and saying, no, no, no.

Let them all come to you. I'll go away somewhere else. This is the spirit that builds the body of Christ.

So that is one aspect of it. The other aspect is you know, people who don't have a sense of responsibility to do something in the church. They say, well, I'm not so gifted.

So don't wait for somebody to push you up. You say, Lord, I want to do something. Please show me something that I can do.

There are people who have discovered something that they can do. But if you sit back and wait for somebody to tell you, tell you, why not go up to the elders and say, hey, I can't do all these other things, but there's something I can do. Tell me what I can do.

Maybe I can pick up the scraps of paper and put it in the trash. Is that a health ministry? Maybe I can volunteer to clean this place on Saturdays. It takes a little inconvenience.

Every ministry is inconvenient. There's no ministry that is convenient in the body of Christ. It requires a little inconvenience.

You say, Lord, I'm willing to do it. Because a lot of people volunteer and don't turn up. I don't want to be like that.

I want to be a volunteer who turns up. I remember many years ago when we were in the other building and different people were deputed to different responsibilities and we had to clean the place in preparation for something. I don't remember what it was.

And someone who was deputed to clean the toilets at the back did not turn up. So I thought, hey, well, maybe somebody is sick at home or something. I don't know why he didn't turn up.

But the Lord told me that day, why don't you do it? Why waiting for somebody else to turn up? Somebody didn't turn up? Oh, you do it then. So I went and did it. I'm willing to do that even today.

But what the Lord said to me that day was, are you willing to pick up the trash and do, you know, clear up things in your house? Why can't you do it in this? This is your house. The church is... Don't just say this church is somebody else's house. This church is your house.

And I learned that day, many years ago, that whatever I can do in my home, I can do in the church also. If I'm responsible to keep my home tidy and to keep things going, I'm responsible to see that keep things clean and tidy and keep things going in the church. If I'm responsible to see that there are enough finances in my home to take care of my family, I'm also responsible to see that there are enough finances to keep CFC going.

Do you have that sense of responsibility? Tell me honestly, do you really have that sense of responsibility? Or do you feel that's my house, this is somebody else's house? Well, no wonder you're spiritually stagnant. No wonder you're sluggish. And I wouldn't be surprised if one day you backslide and fall away altogether.

God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. I'll tell you, anyone who honors God, God will honor him. I can tell you that from 56 years of experience.

You decide to honor God and sacrifice to honor God, you'll be amazed to see what God does for you. Some of your problems in your life are because you don't honor God. That's the reason.

You think it is because this, that and the other, this person, that. No, no, no. It's only because you don't honor God.

You try honoring God and see, now don't do business with him. You say, oh, now I discovered how to do business with God. I'll honor him and he'll honor me.

No. You say, Lord, I'll serve you even if I get nothing. I don't want anything.

Lord, you've already done enough for me on the cross. I want to just serve the rest of my life with expecting no return from anyone. I just want to serve, serve and serve, whether visible or not visible.

So, please take heed to these things. This is what we are testifying to in the breaking of bread. We are one body and we are going to help one another.

One last thing I want to say. Don't try to interfere in the boundary of another. God has given us all boundaries.

For example, the kidneys. The kidneys don't pump blood. That's not their job.

They don't even try to do it. They say, that's the heart's job. The heart will do that.

The kidneys say, our job is only purifying the bloodstream. We just stick to that and purify the bloodstream. And then there's the liver.

The liver does something else, process food and all. The liver takes care of that. So, God has put different functions in the body and we must remain within our boundaries.

Not tread into another person's. Unless, of course, you know, if my right hand is cut off, then the left hand has to do the job of the right hand as well. That means, if somebody doesn't do his job, then we have to do it.

Otherwise, we all have boundaries and say, let me not tread into the boundaries of another. Let me not try and interfere. Let me cooperate.

Let me not compete. I mean, in the body of Christ, no part of this body is trying to show that I am better than the other. If you have that spirit of wanting to show that you are better than somebody else in CFC, you are a cancer in the body of Christ.

I'll tell you that straight to your face. You are a cancer in the body of Christ. You are trying to take to yourself what should be shared by others.

This is the layman's definition of cancer. It's not the official medical one. The layman's definition of cancer is a group of cells that takes everything to itself, which should be distributed all over, and puffs up and becomes big.

It's a cancer. You've got to get rid of it. You've got to remain your size.

If God has made you a small little cell, be a small little cell. But you are very valuable, very important. But stay within your boundary and don't try to compete with anyone.

Cooperate with the other person. And if he gets the honor, praise the Lord. And what if God allows you to have done the job and somebody else gets the credit for it.

Wow! Your reward will be doubled in the day of judgment. Are you happy with that? Or you want to get a reward right now that you did the job and somebody else got the credit for it? Many, many times. You know, there are so many people around the world today who are preaching my sermons.

I know that. And I said, Lord, I'm so happy. I'm supremely happy.

I don't want them to mention my name. Because I'm preaching Paul's sermons and Peter's sermons and John's sermons and it's okay if somebody else preaches my sermons. Perfectly okay.

Because I want the body of Christ to be built. I don't want them to all quote me all the time. Not at all.

I said, let the whole world preach it. Let them preach it in every denomination. I can't go there myself, so let them do it.

That's why we put it all on the internet. One thousand sermons for people in all groups to use everywhere around the world. Absolutely free.

And you don't have to mention my name also. We must have that spirit. I'm not indispensable.

I'm not here to promote myself. I'm not here for anybody to know my name. I'm here to exalt Jesus Christ and build the body.

I wish all of us would be gripped by that spirit. Do you know what a church this will be? It'll be the best church on the face of the earth. We're not competing with anybody.

We want to work towards that end. Apply all these truths to yourself as we break bread today. Let's pray.

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